



CO-OPERATORS IN FLEET STREET

**PRESS
POWER
for the PEOPLE!**

Introduction

IT is nearly a quarter of a century since the Co-operative Movement entered into serious competition with the Press Lords of Fleet Street. The purpose of this booklet is to trace the history of co-operative publishing which led up to that event and to survey the results and the possibilities. The booklet has been designed to be of maximum use to the student of Co-operation, the Guild or auxiliary branch meeting, the speaker, or the active trade unionist and members of the Labour Party. It can be read completely, or by chapter, to meetings as an introduction to discussion, whilst the summary notes that follow will be of use to the more experienced speaker or discussion group leader.

Contents

	Page
1. Pioneer days	3
2. How "Reynolds News" began	7
3. Where we stand to-day	11
4. What kind of newspaper?	15
5. How you can help	19
6. Questions people ask	21

Pioneer Days

From its earliest days the Co-operative Movement has been keenly interested in the development of co-operative journalism and publishing. Although the Movement has never had a large stake in the industry of newspaper and periodical publishing, the printed word has played a large part in co-operative development and throughout the Movement's history thoughtful co-operators have realised the co-operation will not have attained its full stature until it is as powerfully represented in the publishing industry as it is in other industries supplying the needs of the people.

This co-operative interest in print is a natural development from the Movement's principles and ideals. Co-operation began as a Movement of social reform, as a new idea by which men could "take this sorry scheme of things entire, and mould it nearer to the heart's desire." Therefore the early co-operators were anxious that the world should know of their new idea, and the most potent means mankind has discovered for spreading ideas was then, and is now, the printed word.

Indeed, from the standpoint of Co-operative history it might reasonably be argued that a newspaper preceded and inspired the very creation of the Movement. In May, 1828, that remarkable man Dr. William King, of Brighton, began publication of a 48 page monthly tract which he called *The Co-operator*. Like many reformers of his day, he was attracted by Robert Owen's idea of "contracting out" of the economic system by men and women living in self-supporting communities. But being an exceedingly practical man he realised that it would take a long time to acquire the huge capital needed to buy land and form a community. So he urged that working people should make a beginning towards accumulating the capital by pooling their household purchasing and putting the profits into a fund which would be the nucleus of the capital to form a community.

Several hundred small co-operative societies were formed as a result of King's advocacy. Most of them failed for reasons which need not be

discussed here, but they paved the way for the successful introduction of Rochdale Co-operation in 1844.

King published *The Co-operator* until 1830, twenty-eight monthly issues in all. He was not only a pioneer of co-operative trading; he was the founder of co-operative journalism.

Pitman's Co-operator

The next important venture in co-operative journalism came in 1860 when the Manchester Equitable Society (now the Manchester & Salford Society) began publication of a journal which revived the title of *The Co-operator*. In 1861 ownership was transferred to Henry Pitman, brother of the inventor of Pitman's shorthand, and a man who was for many years a prominent, if somewhat eccentric, co-operator.

To Pitman and his magazine go the honour of giving focus and direction to the vague ideas that were afloat among the scattered co-operators of the 60's that the time was ripe for them to come together in some form of national organisation.

In October, 1860, Pitman wrote in *The Co-operator*, "There are few localities where co-operative societies have not been commenced; and we shall not be contradicted when we state that they can be counted by the hundred. We ask then if the time has not arrived to collect these scattered fragments . . . these separate co-operative societies, together and establish a strong and indissoluble union of co-operators." He continued to advocate this idea, and enlisted the enthusiastic co-operation of William Pare, a man who had been a follower of Robert Owen, a salaried Owenite "missionary" and governor of one of the several unsuccessful communities that were established as a result of Owen's advocacy. Over a number of years Pare wrote in *The Co-operator* a series of articles advocating the establishment of a central co-operative body and he foreshadowed in detail what became the organisation of the present Co-operative Union. His idea was to hold an annual Congress for the exchange of information and experiences; to maintain a permanent staff for education and propaganda; and that the societies should elect a central executive board with a paid secretary.

Co-operators are, and always have been like other sections of British democracy in that they like things to be done in a tidy way, and if something has to be done that affects all societies, they like it to be done by a body that is responsible to all societies. Moreover, Pitman, although a sincere co-operator was also an enthusiast for many other causes, particularly that of public health, and he began to mix his co-operative advocacy with various other of his ideas of what was

good for the health of the individual. In 1870 he added the name *Herald of Health* to *Co-operator* and twelve months later it was altered to *The Co-operator and Anti-Vaccinator*.

Co-operators began to feel that their Movement was being made to look slightly ridiculous when what was in effect its official journal was mixed up with so many other causes. So as the Movement grew in the 60's there was a move to establish a proper co-operative newspaper society which could publish an official paper for the Movement. This culminated in the establishment of the Co-operative Newspaper Society in 1871 and the launching of the *Co-operative News* in the same year. Pitman's *Co-operator* was later merged in the *Co-operative News*, and in 1894 the Scottish Co-operative Newspaper Society was formed to establish the *Scottish Co-operator*.

Co-operative Press Ltd.

This brings us down to more or less the present organisation of the Co-operative Movement's Press interests. The English and Scottish newspaper societies amalgamated in 1920 and are now known as the Co-operative Press Limited. The Co-operative Press is the biggest publishing organisation in the Movement, publishing the *Co-operative News*, *Scottish Co-operator*, *Woman's Outlook*, *Our Circle*, *Millgate*, *Reynolds News*, the *Citizen* series of monthly broadsheets and the *Illustrated Carpenter and Builder*. In addition, the C.W.S. publishes the *Co-operative Home Magazine* and the *Producer*; the Co-operative Union publishes the *Co-operative Review*, the *Co-operative Productive Federation* publishes the *Co-operative Productive Review*; and there are various minor co-operative publications. For example, the British Federation of Young Co-operators publishes *The Young Co-operator*, and the Men's Guild publishes the *Guildman*.

So much for the general history of co-operative publishing. The feature which stands out from the past is that every co-operative pioneer of the last century emphasised the vital necessity for effective co-operative publicity. At this point it is desirable to digress and consider the origin and history of *Reynolds News* up to the time it was purchased by the Movement in 1929.



Summary Notes

CO-OPERATIVE interest in publishing goes back to earliest days of the movement. Co-operation began as movement of social change; hence the Pioneers sought to establish journals to advocate their social ideas.

First, specifically co-operative journal was "The Co-operator," founded by Dr. William King in May, 1828.

He urged working men to pool their household purchasing and from the profits of self supply form a fund to buy land and establish Owenite communities.

King ceased publishing "The Co-operator" in 1830. The next co-operative journal was also called "The Co-operator," and was published in 1860 by the Manchester Equitable Society.

In 1861 ownership was transferred to Henry Pitman (brother of inventor of Pitman's shorthand), who was a prominent co-operator.

Later, it was considered that the movement itself should own its official journal, and in 1871 the Co-operative Newspaper Society was founded to publish the "Co-operative News," which subsequently absorbed "The Co-operator."

The Co-operative Newspaper Society has since changed its name and is now known as the Co-operative Press Ltd.

It is the biggest publishing organisation in the co-operative movement and publishes the "Co-operative News," "Scottish Co-operator," "Woman's Outlook," "Our Circle," "Millgate," "Reynolds News," and "The Citizen" series of monthly broadsheets.

The principal other publishing organisations in the movement are the C.W.S. ("Co-operative Home Magazine" and "Producer"); the Co-operative Union ("Co-operative Review"); the Co-operative Productive Federation ("Co-operative Productive Review").



How "Reynolds News" began

Reynolds News is the oldest Radical newspaper published in the English language. It was founded in May 1850, and takes its name from one of the most remarkable men of the early part of last century, a man whose whole life was in the best traditions of the British race.

He was born the son of an Admiral of the Royal Navy and inherited sufficient wealth to have given him an easy life without labour had he desired it. If he had wanted honours, his social position and his personal qualities would have made it easy for him to win them.

But he was a man of great and sympathetic heart. He was roused to passionate protest by the misery and poverty which lay beneath the comfort and luxury of Victorian society. He believed in equality of opportunity for all men and he rebelled against the political system which disenfranchised most of the people, and vested all power in a small aristocracy and middle class.

His name was George William MacArthur Reynolds, and he founded the newspaper which the Co-operative Movement now owns.

Reynolds was a Chartist, and he started *Reynolds News* to advocate the Peoples' Charter and to voice his demand for political, social and economic reform.

He stamped on *Reynolds News* a tradition that it has never lost. Always it has been a Radical paper, the enemy of vested interests, hypocrisy and privilege, and the champion of the common man.

George Reynolds was far ahead of his time, as the spokesmen of the people usually are ahead of their time in politics and social ideas. A few extracts from some of his articles in *Reynolds News* just about a hundred years ago, in 1853, will give an idea of his advanced views and forthright journalism.

Take an article he wrote on India on March 27th, 1853—a prophetic article, for only four years later the horrors of the Indian Mutiny fell upon that land. Reynolds wrote: "... the Cabinet threatens

to legislate for India in a manner that will leave the unfortunate people of that immense territory still at the mercy of a clique of rapacious despots in Leadenhall Street, (the Headquarters of the East India Co.). In short, the Ministry propose to renew the East India Charter during the present session. It is a Government of India in whose appointment the natives have no voice—over whose acts they have no control—and the slightest disobedience of whose arbitrary decrees is visited by severe punishments and ferocious persecutions.”

Reynolds did not live to see India free, but we who inherit the paper he founded can be glad that freedom came to India as the gift of the first real Peoples' Government in British history.

Here is another quotation from this man that has a topical significance to-day. Writing of the House of Lords in April of 1853 he said: “No wise, just and popular measure has ever passed the Upper House without the fiercest opposition; many have been rejected through its agency; and those which have survived the ordeal of a transit through that nest of bigotry and arrogance owe their salvation more to a sense of fear than of justice on the part of the coroneted Foozles who would, had they the courage, strangle every measure calculated to expand the intellects, extend the political power or add to the social comfort of the people.” How right he was! How right he is!

Unique Character and Readership

These quotations illustrate the policy that has always been followed in *Reynolds News* and that has given the paper its unique character and readership. Other newspapers have been started that were just as Radical as *Reynolds News* in their earlier days. But every single one of them has fallen by the wayside and is now simply a gramophone playing the tune chosen by some Press Peer.

Reynolds News supported trade unionism. The files are full of references to the early Co-operative Movement. The paper supported the establishment of the Labour Party. In the American civil war it was on the side of the North against the slave-owning South, although George Reynolds never hesitated to point out that in pretty well everything but name great numbers of British people

in his day were little better off than the Negro slave. To quote his words: "In England the working classes are bound hand and foot to their employers: the workers are entirely at the mercy of the givers of work. There are a thousand laws to protect employers—not one to protect the workers. And in order that the system shall remain so, the power of legislation is retained in the hands of the class to which the givers of work belong—millions of workers being carefully excluded from any interference in the matter. One-seventh of the population, being possessed of political power, is enabled to rule the other six-sevenths with a rod of iron. Is this slavery or is it not?"

Lawyer-Editor Defends Socialists

Eighteen forty eight was the year of revolutions in Europe and although *Reynolds News* was not in existence in that great year when the Kings and the oppressors trembled, it was the friend and supporter of the refugees who fled to England from Germany, Hungary, France and Austria after the triumph of reaction.

When France backed by Austria and Prussia, demanded the expulsion of Kossuth, the Hungarian patriot, and Mazzini, the Italian democrat, *Reynolds News* warned the Government that it would plunge the country into near civil war if it dared to hand over these two great liberators to be butchered by the Hapsburgs and Louis Napoleon.

Throughout the nineteenth century the paper was constantly on the side of the common people in their struggle to win social justice. When George Reynolds died in 1879 he was succeeded within a few years by W. M. Thompson, another great Radical journalist. Thompson championed the starving unemployed of London when they rioted through the West End in February 1886. When John Burns, H. M. Hyndman, H. H. Champion and Jack Williams, Socialist leaders of the unemployed, were charged with seditious conspiracy, Thompson, who was also a barrister, defended them and secured their acquittal.

In 1889 *Reynolds News* championed the London dockers who struck for the "docker's tanner." The paper had a world wide reputation as the champion of the people, and when the Australian dockers raised thousands of pounds to help the London strikers, it was to *Reynolds News* that they cabled the money.

After Thompson's death the paper passed into the ownership of Lord Dalziel, a close associate of Lloyd George. Under his ownership some of the old crusading fervour went out of its columns, and technically the paper deteriorated and was outstripped by its Sunday competitors. Then in 1929 *Reynolds News* began the second great period of development when it was bought from Lord Dalziel by the Co-operative Press Limited (then known as the National Co-operative Publishing Society).



Summary Notes

"REYNOLDS NEWS" was founded in May, 1850, by George William MacArthur Reynolds.

He was a Chartist and founded the paper to advocate the People's Charter and to voice demands for political, social, and economic reform.

(Use here quotations from early articles by Reynolds.)

From its first issue the paper

has been an outspoken advocate of progressive courses.

(Quote examples from Chapter Two.)

In the early years of this century the paper became the property of Lord Dalziel. Under his ownership it lost some of its progressive character.

In 1929 the paper was bought by the Co-operative Press Ltd., and began its second great period of development.



One Story

SO far we have traced in broad outline the history of the Co-operative Movement in publishing and the history of REYNOLDS NEWS. From now on the two stories are one. REYNOLDS NEWS celebrated its centenary in May 1950, and for the past twenty-three years it has been the Sunday journal of the Co-operative Movement, the only general newspaper sold commercially to the public by co-operators anywhere in the world.

Where We Stand To-day

When we consider co-operation's role in the Press world to-day, the first question we have to ask is: where do we stand? How much progress have we made in publishing in more than a hundred years of Co-operative trading?

We can draw little satisfaction from the answer. Progress has been made, but it is very small in comparison with the general progress of the Movement, and with the development of the Press as a whole. First of all, let us look at the Movement's position in terms of the circulation of co-operative literature of all kinds.

The weekly combined circulation of the *Co-operative News*, *Scottish Co-operator*, and *Reynolds News*, is about 820,000. The fortnightly circulation of *Woman's Outlook* is 70,000. The combined monthly circulation of other Co-operative publications (principally the *Home Magazine* and the *Citizen*) is just over 1,000,000. If we reduce all these figures to a weekly average we get a total of approximately one million "pieces of co-operative literature" going out to the public each week.

The figure of one million sounds impressive until we begin to measure it against other figures. First of all, there are eleven million co-operative members; therefore our million represents only about one-eleventh of the Movement's total membership. Secondly, we can compare the figure against the total weekly sales of national and local morning, evening and Sunday newspapers. That total is more than 200 millions a week; therefore, in penetration of the newspaper reading public, co-operation represents only one two hundredth of the power and influence that the Press can wield. Moreover, tens of millions of copies of magazines are sold each week in addition to newspapers. The total number is not known, but it is very large, and in the last few years

has increased considerably compared with pre-war. So that on every quantitative comparison co-operation has made relatively little progress in the field of mass publishing.

And on qualitative standards our figure of a million weekly has to be discounted by one important factor. This is so because a large proportion of the total is given away (the *Citizen* and *Home Magazine*), whereas all copies of non-co-operative publications are bought and paid for. It is a well-known fact that however well produced technically a free publication may be, it does not have the same influence as one for which people have paid.

Biggest Single Source of Information

For many reasons co-operators and not only co-operators, but the whole working-class movement, must find these figures profoundly disturbing. First of all, they mean that our ideas and principles cannot exert their full influence in the life of the community and the practical achievements of co-operative trade are not appreciated in their full social significance. This is bound to be so, because the Press, newspaper and periodical, is still the biggest single source from which people draw the news and information on which they base their opinions and to-day almost the entire Press tacitly ignores the social significance of co-operation, or is violently hostile to the Movement. As a Movement we have the body of a giant, but the voice of a pygmy. Secondly, we must be dissatisfied with our position for a hard economic reason. We have always prided ourselves as co-operators that we can beat capitalism at its own game in the mass market consumer industries, like the supply of soap, flour, boots and shoes and so on. The Press is an outstanding example of a mass market consumer industry. It produces a commodity which is in universal demand, which is cheap in price and which is "manufactured" and distributed by all the characteristic methods of mass distribution. Yet in an industry which conforms to all the tests which have usually spelt success for co-operative methods we have so far made relatively little progress.

There are many reasons for this unsatisfactory position. Co-operation was late in making a start in mass market publishing and

even to-day we have only a toe-hold in this industry through our ownership of *Reynolds News*. We did not enter the industry until 1929, by which time the big capitalist newspaper groups were well established and strong. The first seven years with *Reynolds News* was spent in devising schemes to re-equip the paper and it was not until the new *Reynolds News* was launched in 1936 that we were able to begin competing in a technical sense. Moreover, many of the methods which make for success with popular newspapers are strange to co-operative thinking and vast sums of capital have to be provided which are often unremunerative for long periods until a paper is established in the big circulation field.

The influence of the capitalist Press is further emphasised when we realise that practically half the total circulation of British newspapers is, in fact, under the control of three powerful organisations headed by the Press Lords Kemsley, Rothermere and Beaverbrook.

Great Achievement

When all this has been said, however, we have also to remember that there is a bright side to the picture. The Movement HAS succeeded in breaking into popular journalism entirely on its own resources, which no other section of the democratic movement has ever succeeded in doing. We have held our own and made progress for twenty-one years in the toughest struggle which any co-operative production has to face. Every other co-operative production has the enormous moral and practical help of being sold in co-operative establishments, where the drive is all the time to push the sales of the co-operatively manufactured article. *Reynolds News* has to go out into the open market and compete with ten other powerful national Sunday papers. To have made the progress we have is an achievement of some magnitude. While we have reason to be dissatisfied we have no reason to be pessimistic. Our task is to mobilise the enormous resources for Press expansion that are latent in the Movement. That is discussed in the next chapters.



Summary Notes

Where does the Co-operative Movement stand to-day in the business of newspaper and magazine publishing? The position is not a satisfactory one.

If we average out the circulation of all co-operative publications, weekly, fortnightly, and monthly, we get an average figure of one million "pieces of co-operative literature" distributed to the public each week.

This is equal to one-tenth of the Movement's membership and to one two-hundredth of the weekly circulation of national and local morning, evening, and Sunday newspapers.

Moreover, many of the co-operative publications ("Home Magazine" and "Citizen") are given away free, and no matter how well they are produced, free journals do not have the influence on the public of journals that have been paid for.

This weakness in the publishing industry must cause serious concern for two reasons: (1) it

means that co-operative ideas do not get a proper hearing; (2) it is a measure of economic failure in a mass-production industry particularly suitable for co-operative development.

Reasons for the Movement's unsatisfactory position are (1) we were late in starting in the industry—"Reynolds News," our only popular general newspaper, was not purchased until 1929; (2) the big capitalist newspaper combines were already firmly established when we came into the field; (3) enormous sums of capital are required for popular newspaper development.

Co-operators can congratulate themselves, however, on being the only section of the working-class movement which has established itself, even though only on a small scale, in mass publishing, entirely on its own resources and without having to compromise in any way with the financial interests of capitalism. The problem now is to build up circulation and influence.



What Kind of Newspaper?

We have seen that the Movement was a late-comer to the business of mass publishing and that even to-day *Reynolds News* is our only representative in this field; all other Co-operative journals being sold inside the Movement's own organisation. Generally speaking, there is no great problem with these "internal" journals. There is always room for improvement in the circulation of papers like the *Co-operative News*, *Scottish Co-operator*, *Woman's Outlook*, and so on. But by and large, they do not represent an acute problem. Our principal problem in the newspaper industry is represented by *Reynolds News* and the essence of that problem is to increase the circulation of the paper.

We start off from an inescapable fact. A national Sunday newspaper produced without any associated daily or evening paper to share its costs cannot hope to survive and prosper on a circulation much under a million and a quarter to a million and a half. Costs of production in the newspaper industry are enormously high and on the capital value represented by the buildings and plant which produce *Reynolds News* the figures quoted are the minimum economic circulation at which we must aim.

We have made some progress towards this objective. Circulation of *Reynolds News* to-day is 715,000, an increase of about 200,000 on the immediate pre-war period. But there is still a great gap between the present and the economic circulation. It is a gap which can only be bridged by continuous co-operation between the Co-operative Press Limited and all active men and women in the Co-operative Movement and the wider working class movement.

From the Co-operative Press side, the first problem that had to be faced once the paper had been equipped with modern plant and production methods, was to find an editorial formula of contents which would enable *Reynolds News* to win new readers and hold them when they have been obtained. This editorial formula had to be worked out by a process of trial and error in the conduct of the paper.

In the earlier days of Co-operative ownership, the Co-operative Press found that when it produced a newspaper which was not only advanced and progressive in its politics and on economic matters, but sought to cover all other aspects of life with equal seriousness, it was not possible to raise the circulation much beyond half a million. Even that figure was attained mainly on the basis of an exceptionally generous free death benefit scheme linked to the Co-operative Movement's collective life assurance scheme. When the scheme was withdrawn as all papers withdrew their free insurance schemes early in the last war, *Reynolds News* suffered a calamitous loss in circulation which went on for many months.

Taste for Light Sunday Reading

This war time experience convinced the Co-operative Press that the formula of editorial content was wrong and would have to be changed if *Reynolds News* was to be given an opportunity to succeed. The first decision made was that the distinctive Radical and progressive attitude to public affairs, which has marked *Reynolds News* for a century, must be retained, and there must be no slackening in the paper's championship of the ordinary man and woman as wage-earner and consumer. Roughly speaking, this meant that a solid and progressive "leader" page must be retained and that in its news page reporting of public topics, the paper must continue to emphasize the advantages of public as against private enterprise, and social as well as individual responsibility. But in the rest of the paper's contents it was decided that *Reynolds News* must begin to give more of the lighter, entertainment reading which experience shows the public wants and insists on having on a Sunday. In other words, the paper must give more articles of a magazine character, stories of personal adventure and experience, of the half-worlds of crime and espionage, serial stories, gossip features, brightly written articles about people in the news, more sport and so on.

Some Co-operators have disagreed with this policy, their criticism being chiefly on one aspect of the policy—the publication of serial stories. It should be realised, however, that serial stories are only one of many changes that have been introduced into the contents of *Reynolds News* in the last five years, and before criticising it is

as well to consider all the factors involved, including the nature of the Sunday newspaper industry and the demands which the public make on that industry.

The first factor is that Sunday is a day of relaxation, a day when people tend to put slippers on their minds as well as on their feet. They want relaxation and change in their newspaper reading as well as in the slackening off of physical exertion. Sunday newspapers have always been lighter and more "magaziney" in their contents than daily papers. This public taste for a lighter Sunday paper has grown up over three-quarters of a century. *Reynolds News* has not created the taste and it cannot by itself hope to change a situation which is the result of a great many social and economic factors. Public taste in this respect will only be changed by raising the general level of education, by the improvement of social conditions and by easing the tensions and fears that trouble people's minds to-day. A newspaper, like a Co-operative Society, must in many ways accept conditions as they are, and work to change the fundamental basis of society so that better conditions become possible. The question can be put like this: is it better to make concessions to public taste in order to retain the power to fight as a newspaper for better standards of education, better conditions for the mass of the people and for policies that will abolish the threat of war that hangs like a thunder-cloud over civilisation; or is it better to insist on certain advanced standards in journalism that are beyond the general level of what the public will accept and probably go out of existence as a newspaper because of inability to obtain sufficient readers?

Commonsense Principle

The Co-operative Press made the former choice, believing that the first responsibility of the Press is to keep *Reynolds News* in existence as a fighting newspaper and give it the capacity to expand and widen its influence. Analogies for this decision can be drawn from the experience of most Co-operative Societies. The Co-operative Movement sells in its shops many commodities which, while they are not harmful, cannot honestly be described as necessary or good for the consumer. The Movement does so because the demand for these commodities has been created by mass advertising and by the conditions of modern life. The Movement does so because it knows that if it does not supply these commodities, its members will go elsewhere for them. Powerful as it is, the Co-operative Movement cannot yet determine the standards of public taste, and it proceeds on the sound assumption that its usefulness and influence in the community depend on bringing the biggest possible proportion of the consumer's spending

power into Co-operative shops. That is exactly the principle on which the Co-operative Press conduct *Reynolds News*.

This change in the editorial formula of *Reynolds News* has produced results. As stated earlier, it has been possible to increase the circulation by about 200,000; most of which has been secured since newspapers became in free supply and it was possible to test results on a free competitive market. The increase is far below what is necessary but it is sufficient to show that the policy is on the right lines and that if, as a Movement, we can mobilise sufficient energy and drive behind securing new readers we have a good prospect of securing an economic circulation within a reasonable period of time.



Summary Notes

ONE of the biggest problems to be settled with "Reynolds News" was to decide what kind of a newspaper it should be.

At first the attempt was made to produce a newspaper that would be serious and "solid" throughout.

Experience showed that it was not possible to build up mass circulation on this basis. Such progress that was made, was largely on the basis of a costly free insurance scheme, and when this was withdrawn early in the war, circulation fell heavily.

The Co-operative Press Ltd. decided on a new formula for editorial policy, which has now been in operation for about five years. Consists of two parts: (1) that the progressive and radical tradition of the paper, must be maintained in its attitude to political, economic, and

social affairs; (2) that in the rest of its contents the paper must concentrate on what are called "popular appeal" features.

Arguments for this formula are (1) Sunday is a day of relaxation when people insist on having a lighter kind of reading; (2) this demand for lighter reading in the Sunday Press is something which no single newspaper can change; (3) it is better to attract new readers by these lighter features, so that they will be influenced by the more serious features, than to limit the paper's circulation to the circle of the already converted.

As a result of this policy it has been possible to increase the circulation of "Reynolds News" in free competition by about 200,000.

How You Can Help

How can we increase the circulation of *Reynolds News*?

The first point which must be made is that this cannot be done by the Co-operative Press alone; it depends on continuous and active co-operation between the Co-operative Press and every individual co-operator who appreciates the importance of Press power.

How can the individual help?

First of all, he or she should be a reader of *Reynolds News*; that is the essential preliminary from which all else starts. Secondly, he or she should see if their Society, is a subscriber to the Co-operative Collective Advertising Scheme (this is a scheme by which retail Societies are asked to subscribe a small sum per £ of sales to a collective advertising fund used to advertise co-operative goods and services in *Reynolds News*). If a local Society is not subscribing to the fund, active co-operators should use their influence to bring their Society into the scheme. If they want further information they can obtain it by writing to The Co-operative Relations Department, *Reynolds News*, Pioneer House, Wicklow Street, London, W.C.1.

Next, active co-operators can "talk up" *Reynolds News* by taking every opportunity at Guild Meetings, Labour Party Meetings and other democratic assemblies, to urge support of the paper. More specifically, every active co-operator should aim to persuade at least three friends in the Co-operative, Labour or Trade Union Movements to buy *Reynolds News* and to give the paper at least six months, trial.

Experience has shown that the best means of increasing circulation is word of mouth recommendation from individual readers. *But* it is important that the new readers should be persuaded to give the paper several months' trial. If a paper can be kept in the reader's hands for about six months, that person tends to continue as a reader.

At the moment newsprint rationing regulations curtail the canvassing and other activities which a newspaper itself can conduct to

secure new readers. But all of the actions described in the preceding paragraphs are permissible. There are approximately 60,000 Guildswomen in England and 35,000 in Scotland. If every Guildswoman obtained only three new readers for the paper, it would almost bridge the gap between the present circulation and the desired figure of one million copies per week.

Guildswomen Could Do It

That figure is a challenge and an opportunity. It means that Guildswomen alone have it in their power to break the stranglehold which a few wealthy men at present have on the British Press. If every Guildswoman pledged herself to do no more than the small practical job of securing three new readers among friends and relations, the Women's Guild would have made the greatest contribution to winning Press power for co-operation that has been made since the Movement bought *Reynolds News* in 1929.

To-day our Movement has become a huge commercial organisation. Some of the old pioneering fire and the old instinct for voluntary service has diminished. The ideal still burns, but the flame is obscured by apathy, by feeling that the machine is so big that there is nothing left for the individual to do. It is largely to the Guilds and auxiliary bodies that we must look for a revival of the old instinct for individual service. Here, in the building up of *Reynolds News* circulation, is a job of work for every active co-operator.



Summary Notes

YOU can help to build up the circulation and influence of "Reynolds News" in the following ways:—

- (1) By becoming a regular reader.
- (2) By seeing that your society subscribes to the Co-operative Collective Advertising Fund.
- (3) By taking every opportunity to talk about the paper at co-operative, trade union, and Labour Party meetings.
- (4) By persuading your friends to become readers and giving the paper at least six months' trial.

The Questions People Ask

Anyone who speaks on *Reynolds News* will usually be asked many questions about the paper and about the Press in general. These questions are to be encouraged for they are a sign of interest. This chapter gives some of the questions which are most commonly asked, and the information from which a reply can be made.

QUESTION: *Why does "Reynolds News" not give more publicity to the Co-operative Movement? A variation of the question is: Why is more publicity not given to Women's Guild activities?*

ANSWER: *Reynolds News* works to a carefully worked out policy in regard to publicity for the Co-operative Movement. We start from the point that *Reynolds News* has to compete in its contents as a general newspaper if it is to win new readers and retain its present readers. It is a proved fact in the newspaper industry that if too much direct and obvious propaganda for an organisation appears in the columns of a general newspaper readers are lost and new readers are repelled. Even capitalist newspapers are careful how far they go in publicising particular capitalist institutions. What newspapers *can* do is to publicise a way of life and an attitude to public affairs. They can, as in the capitalist press, so "angle" and present their material as to give the impression that private enterprise is superior to public enterprise, that social services are wasteful and inefficient, that Labour and Co-operative politicians are not fitted to conduct the nation's affairs, and so on. What a newspaper like *Reynolds News*, can do is to place its emphasis in selection and presentation of its articles and news on a different and better way of life, the Co-operative way of public rather than private enterprise, social as well as individual responsibility. This is done all the time in the columns of *Reynolds News*. The paper stands for and advocates co-operative principles in the broad general meaning of the term.

So far as direct publicity for Co-operative organisations is concerned, the policy is to use the columns of *Reynolds News* for big-scale co-operative publicity only on those occasions when the Movement has done something that is important and newsworthy in its own right. Thus, when the Movement launched its price cuts campaign in February 1948, the campaign was the main article on the front page and on the "leader" page for many weeks. When the Monopolies Bill was going through the House of Commons, there were stories in *Reynolds News* week after week about the part played by the Co-operative Party in strengthening the Bill. Purchase Tax on necessities has been repeatedly attacked by articles and news stories in the paper. The Movement's Annual National Congresses and Conferences are always prominently reported. And, of course, *Reynolds News* constantly seeks to bring out the epic world-wide achievements of co-operators whenever some event such as the Congress of the International Co-operative Alliance provides an opportunity to do so.

Heavy Artillery for Big Targets

What the paper does not do is try to report local Co-operative events, mid-week events, or events which may have considerable internal interest to particular Societies or sections, but have little general news interest. These events are not covered principally because of the newspaper public's resistance to "institutional" news, described earlier, and partly because they are usually fully covered in the *Co-operative News*.

As a consequence of this policy of selective publicity, of using one's heavy artillery only for big targets, *Reynolds News* has been able on many public issues such as those quoted to bring out the social importance of co-operation and the progressive role played by the Movement far more effectively than has ever been done before in Co-operative history.

The policy is not a static one. *Reynolds News* seeks all the time to accustom its readers to an increasing amount of material about the Movement, or presenting a co-operative point of view. Here are some figures which show the increase in the amount of space devoted to co-operative topics. From October 1, 1946, to 31 March, 1947, the total amount of co-operative material in the paper (excluding collective advertisements) was 487½ column inches. From October 1, 1951, to March 1, 1952, the total was 1,790 column inches, nearly a fourfold increase. Some of the increase is represented by competitions in which the subjects are connected with the movement, but it is nonetheless valuable publicity for co-operative activities.

So far as the Women's Guild is concerned, the policy is the same as that for the Movement generally—to publicise the Guild at the time of its Annual Congress, or when it is associated with some big public topic. The Guild Congress is held at an awkward period of the week for a Sunday newspaper. It begins on a Tuesday and ends on a Thursday. The debates are fully reported in the *Co-operative News* and in recent years they have received increased publicity in the daily Press. Therefore, there is no point in *Reynolds News* attempting on the Sunday after Congress to report speeches which simply duplicate what has appeared in the *Co-operative News* and the daily Press. Instead, *Reynolds News* has adopted a policy of printing a feature article about the Guild and its work on the Sunday before Congress, and another article on the Sunday after Congress.

Naturally, co-operators want to see more about the Movement in their own paper. The Directors and Editor of *Reynolds News* are equally anxious to give that publicity. But like co-operators in other walks of life, they have learnt from experience what is possible and what is not possible. From that experience has been evolved the policy described in the preceding paragraphs.

QUESTION: *How is the policy of "Reynolds News" controlled (sometimes expressed indirectly in the form: why does the paper not support this campaign or advocate that policy)?*

ANSWER: *Reynolds News* is controlled directly by the Board of the Co-operative Press Ltd., who are elected on a democratic vote by more than 800 shareholding Co-operative Societies. Some auxiliary bodies (including the Men's and Women's Guilds) are also shareholders. Indirectly, the paper's policy is controlled by the decisions of the Annual Co-operative Congress, including the decisions of the Co-operative Party Conference, which become Congress policy when the Party's Annual report is adopted by Congress (constitutionally the Co-operative Party is part of the machinery of the Co-operative Union. As a loyal section of the Co-operative Movement the Co-operative Press, on behalf of *Reynolds News* carries out and advocates Congress policy and also the general body of Co-operative principles, such as equality of men and women, democracy in economic affairs, and so on. Considerable freedom has to be exercised in interpreting policy, or on subjects on which the movement has not declared itself. But when Congress has made decisions, the paper is bound by them. A secondary, though very real, loyalty is to the Labour and Trade Union Movements. The paper has supported those Movements from its inception by George William MacArthur Reynolds. To-day it has an organic link with them through the

Co-operative Movement's membership of the National Council of Labour.

QUESTION: *Why does "Reynolds News" print advertisements of goods which compete with Co-operative productions?*

ANSWER: *Reynolds News* is a general newspaper. The public expect to see in its columns substantially the same kinds of advertisements that they see in other newspapers. The reading and comparison of advertisements is one of the motives which attract readers to newspapers. If *Reynolds News* printed only co-operative advertisements it would be deprived of one of the vital elements, i.e. variety of advertisers, which make for newspaper popularity. It would become stamped in the public mind as an "institutional" and not a general newspaper. Moreover, it would require an enormous increase in the amount of co-operative advertising to make good the loss of all or most private advertisements, an increase which it is unlikely could be obtained from within the Movement. There is no vital question of principle involved in this question, because so long as societies continue to sell private goods in their shops it cannot reasonably be argued that *Reynolds News* should be denied the right to print advertisements for these goods. The position is, in fact recognised by the two wholesale societies, who do not object to the publication of these advertisements.

With the "internal" journals of the Co-operative Press, *Co-operative News*, *Woman's Outlook*, and *Scottish Co-operator*, a different position exists. In these journals, which do not compete for circulation on the general market, the Co-operative Press does not accept advertisements for goods that are competitive with co-operative productions.

QUESTION: *When is the Co-operative Press going to start a daily newspaper?*

ANSWER: The first problem is to increase the circulation of *Reynolds News*.

Until that problem is solved, it would be a mistake to add a new problem before the first had been solved. Therefore, all that can be said as to the time for starting a daily is that it depends primarily on raising the circulation of *Reynolds News* to over a million copies. Of course, circumstances may change and produce reasons for acting without waiting for the million. But on all the factors that are known at present, the order of priority is, first, a sale for *Reynolds News* of well over one million, then a daily newspaper.

It should be remembered, however, that the Movement has already solved half of the problems involved in starting a daily. The buildings and plant available at London and Manchester could, with very little addition, take on the production of a daily newspaper as well as *Reynolds News*. Therefore, we are well situated for a quick move when the time is ripe.

QUESTION: *Why does "Reynolds News" not give a better sports service? (This question is likely to arise anywhere North of Birmingham).*

ANSWER: In the South and Midlands, *Reynolds News* gives a sports service equal to that of any other Sunday newspaper. But in Scotland and the North, the paper is handicapped, particularly in the cricket season, by having to print only in London. This means that some important late sports results cannot be given if the paper is to catch the trains for the North, and many locally interesting results cannot be obtained in time. The situation is at its worst in the summer, because cricket and athletic meetings continue into the evening, and it is easier in the winter, because darkness makes it necessary to finish soccer and rugby matches at times which usually enable *Reynolds News* to print a large number of Northern reports and results. But both summer and winter the situation is a difficult one in competing with papers which print in both London and Manchester. Northern printing for *Reynolds News* as well is the only solution and that brings us back to circulation, because duplicate printing in Manchester and London would be a great financial burden unless the total circulation was well over one million.

QUESTION: *We often hear talk of the Press Lords; who are they and what is the real extent of their power over public opinion?*

ANSWER: The Royal Commission on the Press 1947-1949, included in its report details of the interests and positions of eight Press Lords as follows:—

Viscount Rothermere. Chairman of the Daily Mail and General Trust Ltd. Holds 21 per cent of the ordinary shares, no other shareholder holds more than 1 per cent. The company controls Associated Newspapers Ltd., which owns the *Daily Mail*, *London Evening News*, *Sunday Dispatch*, the *Overseas Daily Mail*, and through its subsidiary companies, 13 provincial newspapers, and has a minority interest in eight others. (Total weekly circulation over 30,000,000).

Lord Beaverbrook. Controlling shareholder of the London Express Newspaper Company which owns and controls the *Daily Express*, *Sunday Express*, *London Evening Standard*, and the *Glasgow Evening Citizen*. (Total weekly circulation approx. 33,000,000).

Lord Iliffe. A private investment Trust controlled by Lord Iliffe

and his family owns the *Birmingham Post*, *Birmingham Mail*, *Birmingham Weekly Post*, *Walsall Observer*, *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, *Coventry Standard* and the *Coleshill Chronicle*. (Total weekly circulation approx. 3,000,000).

Viscount Camrose. Is life chairman and editor-in-chief of the *Daily Telegraph and Morning Post*. (Weekly circulation over 6,000,000).

Viscount Kemsley. Brother of Viscount Camrose, holds with his family nearly 50 per cent. of the shares of Kemsley Newspapers Ltd. The company owns the *Sunday Times*, *Sunday Chronicle*, *Sunday Empire News*, *Daily Dispatch*, *Evening Chronicle* (Manchester), *Sporting Chronicle* (Manchester) and *Chronicle Mid-Day* (Manchester). Through subsidiary companies Kemsley Newspapers Ltd., own and control the *Daily Graphic*, *Sunday Graphic* and 28 provincial newspapers. (Total weekly circulation over 30,000,000).

Thus between them these five Press Lords have a controlling interest over a joint weekly circulation of more than 100,000,000 newspapers, approximately half the estimated total circulation of all our morning, evening and weekly newspapers.

In addition, **Lord Layton** is a director of the *Daily News Ltd.* which owns the *News Chronicle* and the *London Star*; **Viscount Astor*** is a director of the *Observer Ltd.*, which owns *The Observer* and through a subsidiary company the *Western Independent* and the *South Devon Times*; and **Lord Brand** is a director of *The Times Holding Company* which owns *The Times* and its subsidiary publications.

* Deceased

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